

Everything Stops for Tea

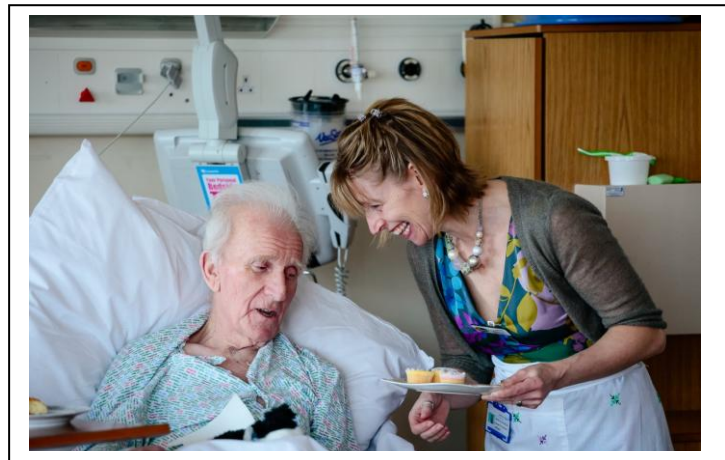
at Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust

Rebecca Seymour, Elevate Co-ordinator, reflects on the responses from older patients to their monthly vintage tea parties.

The suggestion of a tea party came initially from a member of clinical staff on one of the elderly care wards, as she had seen how the Elevate programme delivers bespoke creative activity for patients, responding personally to an individual and getting to the heart of the person through the arts.

After the pilot tea party held in Sept 2014, the Senior Charge Nurse, on that ward immediately requested that the tea parties become monthly events for 2 of his wards, funded from their patient funds, saying, "I have not seen a better way of using that money...the tea party had such an impact for patients I am really glad to be able to commit to it continuing in this way."

Two years later Elevate now delivers monthly tea parties on 3 wards, serving approximately 100 patients per month, with funding support from the Stars Appeal, Salisbury Hospital's Charitable Trust.



The tea parties aim to complement the regular clinical care patients receive, working towards a holistic package which offers truly patient centred care. Tea and cake is served on beautiful vintage china, from a decorated trolley, by a glamorous 1950s dancer/hostess, who is accompanied by a wandering minstrel, singing a range of songs played on guitar, to suit patients' tastes.

We know from the regular Elevate sessions that patients report physical, cognitive, social and emotional benefits from taking part and staff often report feelings of well being/uplift whilst working during these sessions on the wards. The tea party offers

patients, visitors and staff a sociable window in this clinical environment, supporting all the research around the fact that eating is a social activity.

By targeting specific elderly care wards, the whole 'luxurious' experience of being waited on with tea and cake on vintage china at the bedside, supports the regular work of the dietitians, encouraging those patients who may be vulnerable and sometimes isolated to feel special whilst in hospital.

"Surely they're not encouraged to eat chocolate cake?!" you may ask... But it is important to recognise that patients should be **eating for health** and not necessarily just 'Healthy Eating', allowing the valuable calories of a cake in a sociable environment to be of great value to a frail, older patient's recovery.

We regularly hear nursing staff saying "This is the most he/she has eaten for days", as a patient tucks into a fairy cake and is assisted to drink tea from a bone china cup. Patients always say how good the tea tastes from china, rather than plastic beakers!

The Elevate artists are part of the whole package of care in Salisbury hospital, and the tea parties provide further opportunities for staff to engage with their patients on a more social level. Whilst singing along to songs from relevant eras, nurses often find out more about their patients, as it opens up discussion around their past life, loves and passions and takes their minds away from the pain for a while.

Patients with dementia frequently join in the tea parties, especially those who have a tendency to wander, as they can follow the trolley from bay to bay, whilst singing along to their favourite songs. All the Elevate artists are trained in working with people with dementia and we celebrate the tears of laughter and sadness that come with the triggers that music, dance and poetry often cause to happen. Last week, after a hearty sing a long with a patient who was very unsettled and anxious, I discussed with the nurses the trigger songs that we'd found for this particular gentleman.

Encouraging the clinical staff to try creative approaches, particularly with patients with dementia is part of our job on the wards and staff are open to it, when they see it making a difference to a patient's mood. It can also be helpful as a distraction - eg singing whilst clinical procedures are carried out, or enjoying the music whilst assessing a patient walking to the bathroom.

NHS England patient safety lead, Caroline Lecko, commented that she loved the tea parties when visiting Salisbury Hospital last year and the Elevate team were Highly Commended in the Service Improvement Category at our Striving For Excellence Awards 2015.

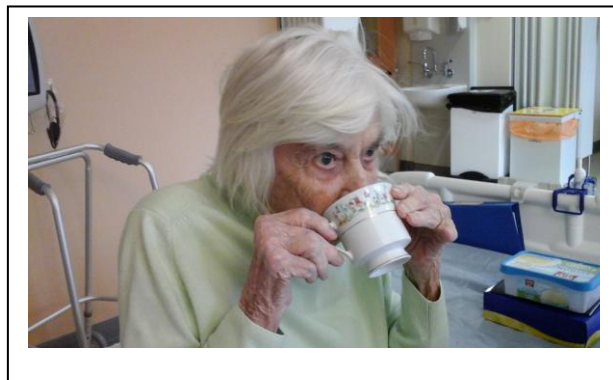
The rewards are tenfold when you hear a patient comment, as the vintage tea trolley arrives:

“This is the sort of stuff that makes this hospital so special. I’ll come again!” Or a husband of a patient say: “It has really lifted my wife’s spirits... and mine too actually” ...
“Made our afternoon, she won’t want to go home!”

We are working in partnership with the Stars Appeal, Salisbury District Hospital’s charity, as Elevate is currently funded by the Charitable Trustees.



Our aim is to be able to bring the tea parties to more patients in the future. Its success is down to the social interaction, nutrition and hydration support for recovery and the way music aids memory function for people with dementia and thus settles anxiety around being in hospital, once familiar territory is found.



“You’re going to get more patients in here, if you treat them like this!” (visitor)

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Stars Appeal:

www.starsappeal.org